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SERMON TITLE: Experiencing God's Love and Power Fully
SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 3:14-21
DATE: February 17, 2019
Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Read also Psalm 31:16-24

2t is Valentine's week. Did you celebrate? Did you buy some candy? Go out to eat? Dance? Say, "I love you!"? Did someone say to you, "Will you be my Valentine?"

I heard about Sweethearts candy going out of business. That's impossible! How are we going to tell our friends we love them without Sweethearts?

Lucky for us there are many expressions of love. To the Greeks, love is so great, they have three words to describe it: *φιλω*, *ερος*, *ἀγάπη*

The Greeks distinguish love between friends—that's *φιλω*. We get the word brotherly or "philia" love. Philadelphia means the City of Brotherly love. The next word in Greek for love represents love between a man and woman—that's *ερος*. We get the word erotic from that word. The third Greek word for love defines the highest love. That the love of God and Christ toward each other; the love between God, Jesus and people, and the love of people toward God. It is called *ἀγάπη*. Agape love exceeds brotherly love. It is love influenced by God's love. That's the word used here.

The Gentiles that made up the church in Ephesus understood the word love well enough that they saw its nuances. Remember, Paul has been talking about how God accepts us, no matter our past; how God makes something out of us, regardless of our former resistance to God; and how God has brought us all together, all races and backgrounds, together under the LOVE of Christ. That is agape love. It goes beyond human love. With that in mind, let's read the passage:

When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources . . . He will *empower you with inner strength through his Spirit*. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as *you trust in him*. *Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong*. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, *how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is*. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. ~ Ephesians 3:14-19

Paul closes with a Doxology:

"Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen." (v. 20-21)

This passage is so rich you can hardly take it in. That's why I have highlighted some words. They are related to two things: feeling God's love and experiencing God's power.

Have you a full sense of God's agape—God's love?

Most people struggle with this so let's see if we can work through it.

You often hear people say, "God is love." But for God to be love there has to be at least two persons because to say "I love you" is not done in a vacuum—there must be an object of love. And, if you have a casual use of the word, "I love these shoes" or "I love to go there" or "Don't you just love his new truck?" then love is variable. It is intangible in the sense that there's no relationship. Thus love is something one person has for another person.

C. S. Lewis poses this question: "If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love." You would not be able to say, "God is love."

He further points out that what we truly mean is "Love is God." That means we value the *feeling* of love.¹

However, feelings standing alone are not tangibly powerful.

When Paul speaks of God's agape love he speaks of it in terms of power. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit created the world and everything in it out of living, dynamic love. God's love is active not static.

It is not an idea or something intangible or simply a feeling but a life that is involved with your life and mine. God's whole life encompasses an explosive, dynamic, creative, living powerful love that can change you. It's like the explosive power of a baseball player hitting a grand slam or a running back as

¹ C. S. Lewis, from *Mere Christianity*, in *A Year with C. S. Lewis*, p. 41.

he explodes through the line for a touchdown. It also might be described as a dance with movement, energy, and joy. The Son looks up to the Father; the Father delights in the Son and along with the Holy Spirit they are united.

We are invited into that union as the Father and Son give the Holy Spirit to us.

Thus it is Father, Son, Holy Spirit—and you!

Out of that union comes the power to give us inner strength to do more than we can imagine or think, and the stability in knowing God's unwavering love, and fullness of life.

This love gives you security, as opposed to constantly seeking love or peace or satisfaction in the wrong people or things.

God's love is a live, concrete thing. You live in it. Like a marriage.

1. He will empower you with inner strength *through his Spirit*.
2. Then *Christ will make his home in your hearts* as you trust in him.
3. Your roots will grow down into *God's love* and keep you strong.

God fully in you. You have to trust him and his power. Are you trusting him and leaning on his power? C. S. Lewis says: "If you want to get warm, you must stand by the fire; if you want to be wet you must get into the water. If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life, you must get close to, or even into, the thing that has them. They are not a sort of prize which God could, if He chose, just hand out to anyone. They are a great fountain of energy . . . spurting up at the very centre of reality. If you are close to it, the spray will wet you; if you are not, you will remain dry."²

We enter into God's life and become sons and daughters. We will love God like Jesus. The Holy Spirit will grow in us until we become strong and stable. Christ is formed in us. (Gal.4:19) and we become a little Christ.

Nothing is stronger or more stable than Christ. To do this, you have to TRUST him. I hope you are asking yourself—*can I trust him and access his power just a little bit more?*

I close with the story of a husband and wife, who met in college. They were both Jewish but they did not continue in the faith of their parents. Doug said in his late teen years his life was filled with parties, sex, and drugs. One day he was at an anti-war rally and someone gave him a Bible and told him Jesus was the Messiah. He brushed her off as nonsense.

To believe in Jesus would total upset everything—his friends were all Jewish. His family members were devote Jews.

At a school dance he met another young woman. While dancing, he asked her to be his boyfriend. She thought he was crazy and she recognized he was actually stoned. So she took him and sobered him up. Yet they continued doing LSD and acid together. But Doug's quest for the truth nagged at him. He remembered the promise, "God will take your heart of stone and make it a heart of flesh" that he read in the Bible which the person had given him at the war rally.

So he began to search for God while his girlfriend was drawn to the occult. She had walked away from God because when she was seven, her father died suddenly one day of a heart attack. She did not understand where he had gone. She watched for him after school each day and prayed he would come back until she finally gave up. She missed him terribly.

In college now, she heard about an occult practice called astro-projection where the soul comes out of the body and goes to whomever you want and you can control that person. She tried it one night and it worked. Hear her story:³

Miriam felt her soul leave, but something else came into her. It spoke to her, 'good is evil and evil is good. Follow me and I will give you everything you ever wanted.' It was dark and foreboding and she knew she would have to get rid of this thing. So she saw a light outside and thought, *light is good*, so she kept looking at it. But suddenly the light went out! She screamed. Doug held her and said, "Okay, let's pray." They recited Psalm 23 and she felt the darkness leave. Afterward, Doug told her, "You must get rid of the occult books and start looking for God, the good God. He gave her the Bible.

As she read it, one day she came to Isaiah 30: 20-21. It was like the ceiling opened up in her dorm room and the presence of God came through these words:

"Though the Lord gave you adversity for food and suffering for drink, he will still be with you to teach you. You will see your teacher with your own eyes. Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, "This is the way you should go," whether to the right or to the left."

Then she heard these words, "I was there when your daddy died and saw your pain, I heard your prayers and I have been there ever since. I love you and want to be in your life."

She cried out, "It's Jesus!"

Have you experienced God's love fully? It is an extraordinary love, powerful enough to be with you and heal all the past. It is an active love which accomplishes infinitely more than you can imagine in your life. **Agape:** you can live in it fully today. Just take His hand and dance.

AMEN

² Ibid., p. 47.

³ To watch the video, see <https://www.chosenpeople.com/site/>, go to Doug and Miriam Kook, "How Do They Find Shalom," accessed February 15, 2019.